Mead

100 SHEETS

COLLEGE RULED

11 x 8½ in / 27.9 x 21.5 cm

1 SUBJECT NOTEBOOK

VALUE QUALITY

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Gymnopédies

Nine Lives

Friends say I must have nine lives; I've had so many brushes with Death and lived to tell the tale. Any fall for a person with o.i. can be deadly; you could break your neck, your back or your head. In my first week at the Grammar school, some of the older boys were turning me around in my chair and tipped me over, so that I hit my head hard on the tarmac of the playground. I thought I'd just bruised the head but as I sat in class later I began to see double and feel faint. After our local G.P. examined me it was decided I should go to the Nuffield Orthopedic Hospital fifty miles away in Oxford. I knew nothing as I lapsed in and out of consciousness. My parents drove me to Oxford in their car. The whole way my mother read me "Winnie the Witch," it was hard for her to read to me without crying. I hated myself for that but I couldn't have told my mother; after my nightmare experience when I was three, I had a terror of hospitals. After undergoing lots of tests, it was discovered that I had a broken skull and a subdural hematoma (blood clot) on the brain. The Surgeon in charge was a Mr Pennybacker, a renowned South African Surgeon who had recently reported successfully the first Siamese twins, Bodey and Baby Betsy. He was a very pleasant man in his fifties, with silvery hair and

big smile. He said I had many problems with my pregnancy which I now had developed as well as the Hypertension. Unluckily for me a nurses' strike was going on at this time. Patients were crowded too many into each ward. I was crowded in with several children and adults. Six people in my ward died before my operation. The boy in the next bed was called Cuddly Death. I got it into my head that this was an omen; I would die as well as him. He had a brain tumor and died on the operating table. Then another boy died of meningitis and two men of cancer. They were wheeled out of the ward covered with white sheets. I asked my mother what they were going. She said "just to another ward," but I knew of course the "other ward" was death. I've never seen my mother scared as at this time. Everyday she came to visit me, crying; she and my Daddy and grandparents were there in a body. I think she was crying over more than just me. Daddy was drinking a lot, no doubt to dull the anxiety and worry over my condition. Not only does he have very very rich double chins, the more he drinks the redder his face is. I was in trouble, no wonder he was so upset. They had to give me

three times the usual amount of shots to put me "out" for the operation. Everyone I had received anesthetic, I had asked to have abnormally long dose, to put me out. I attributed this to the fact that I'm an alcoholic. I don't metabolize drugs or alcohol in a normal way; I kill over or under most normal people. I do believe that alcoholism is a genetically transmitted disease. There is also a tolerance issue, and some doctors think that alcoholic behavior or reaction to drugs is learned. The doctors in Oxford thought I was hypersensitive. When they asked me to count backwards from a hundred after the injection, I managed to get down to fifteen, fourteen... I awoke with a bandaged head and a headache, though not an unbearable one. In for the first thing I saw was a label, some brand name on the doctor's white coat. I looked up and saw Jean and my mother smiling down at me. The doctor asked me to lift up my left arm. Amazingly I had regained the use of my left side. The operation was a complete success. In a week I was back in class wearing a turban to cover my shaved head. One of the boys, a redhead who besides him called Phillip's had taken a collection from the boys and bought me a box of flowers. The

parents) & take it from
of the class, they laughed at
them. Suddenly I was a
kid of hero. Phillpotts was a tough
kid, & former Borstal Boy. We
became friends. He lives currently
bottom of the class, he came
to me & asked a bad attitude,
but a big heart. It's experiences
like this that made me want to become
a teacher - with some encouragement
perhaps I have done a lot better. I
wonder what happened to him. He's probably
a shopkeeper somewhere or a farmer.
But at the moment he's certainly one big
mark.

The Blaspheming Moon

was first performed at Fordham University at Lincoln Center, New York City, in September, 1988. with the following cast:

Achille Emperaire — Christopher David Hewett
The Attendant — Gerard Blackin

and directed by Michael Anthony Thomas, with costumes by Geraldine Dougherty

It has since been performed at Skidmore College and Theatre Caffé Lena in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., and Steve McGraw's and Cornelia St. Café in New York City and Center Galleries in Albany, N.Y. and at the Schoharie County Arts Council Gallery in Cobleskill N.Y.

Dropping out

I always thought that choosing to be a poet meant I would, must lead an unconventional life, be a leftwing radical, a rebel. I read ~~Camus~~ Camus' The Rebel in college and identified with all the feelings therein. I have since met some very conventional poets with ever right-wing politics. I know one who proudly calls himself a "corporate poet" and is a director of a large business firm. For me corporate poet is an oxymoron. I am a romantic. I believe that choosing to be a poet is a way of dropping out of mainstream conventional society; to me it has been an act of rebellion. When I was sixteen I was advised to take a multiple choice "career test" which in 1962 was a new "wonder" but which now, especially in this country, is run-of-the-mill. I was very suspicious of the test; I thought it was part of my high school's plot to turn me into a regular nine-to-five guy, especially since my "career counselor" has advised me to choose a career where people came to me to purchase my services such as that an accountant or a ~~doctor~~ solicitor. Of course financially it made sense, logistically it made sense, but emotionally and spiritually the idea was anathema to me.

Beginning Draft

Math was my least favorite subject, in fact, I hate it and the idea of poring over law books trying to disentangle the "whereto's" from the "whereas's" was repulsive. I knew I would fail at such a career. The counsellor recommended I take A 'Level economics instead of English. This, too, I knew would be disastrous. Self-discipline has never been my forte. I delight in chaos and mystery rather than order and explanation. The result of the multiple-choice career test was amazingly accurate and delighted me. It told me that my number one choice for a career should be a poet, number two a painter, three an explorer and four a musician. The person who figured out the test results and reported them back to us several weeks after we took ~~it~~ it said to me: "The results make sense, except for "explorer. You obviously want to be some kind of artist; in fact, your scores all indicate that except for "explorer." I'm proud to say I replied "But don't you see, explorer and poet are the same?" He shook his head in a perplexed manner as if he thought I was a bit "touches."

One of the ways I have saved myself from becoming "touches" is that I have always striven to protect that creature

Math wasn't [illegible] words suffer
when I don't pay attention to
passing over them to
characters. The "interesting" parts to
attempt "work-around." Brain's
world of still, dense. His counselor
recommended Audio Learning
version of Ender's Game. Brain
read the book. Two, Brain
has higher than [illegible]. Self-studying
is close and puzzles with little
order and sophistication. The brain of
the multiple-choice generation was
always only accurate and helpful. No.
I tell my students
I have zero chance about
Pool, Kimberly, or Jamie, like a
an educator. And answer.
The degree who [illegible] out the test
points and related item bank to VZ
removed weeks of [illegible] it test
results. "If you don't Work, you
accept for "Adopter. Your observing
want to be. some kind of chart; in
Recipient receive an Academy that
accept for "explorer." I'm Proud to
Say Angela "Just don't you're."
Explorer and Poet Angie Jones?" He
Book Is tied to Depleted Honor."
or Is there? was it "Leader."
One of the words I hate reading paper
Does Learning "Leader" is they Just
always there to Protect their Creative

part of me, that "place" in my head and heart where comes the creative urge, the urge to write poems. Now I realize that part is the spiritual part. Until I got sober and went to support groups and therapists for help with overcoming my addiction to alcohol, I abhorred the word "spiritual." I associated it with Reggae beards and Madame Arcarte in Agatha Christie Novels, with cranks and New Age simpletons. Just before I got sober, a friend in Down Cety and I had an argument about spirituality over drinks in George's Bar. I had just finished a tirade against spirituality, or what I believed it to be when my friend said "But you're a spiritual person. You're a poet, all poets are..." coffee I laughed at her my friend's (I'll call her Ellen) comment, but a part of me felt at the back of my mind that she was right. Now I would agree with her. It was Jung who said that practicing alcoholics are on a low-level search for God. I can't claim to have found or believe in God but I do feel a connection with some kind of spiritual force: It's that force that I believe keeps recovering alcoholics sober when they reach out to each other. I think it was Rilke who said that a poet must be capable of great love

I don't know if I'm capable of
great love but I do love being
alive, being a poet, especially a
love poet, very much. I believe my
purpose in being here on earth is to
be a poet. I'm a lot more sure of this
now that I'm older. Now I am a
true rebel. I don't have to bolster
myself with Dutch courage any more.
I am a true drop out rider;
drinking I saw as a joke; oh I talked about
dropping out, I thought I was a hippie.
The hippies had more courage than I
though a lot of them had to overdose
into drugs to keep themselves on the
"poodle-traded." Of course I have
had to earn a living. Thank God I
love teaching; I enjoy passing on
what I know about writing, what I
have learned from my wonderful
teachers such as the poets William
Dickey, Sandra McPherson and
Seamus Heaney. Two years ago
I got what I hope was my first and
last conventional nine-to-five job.
I was a Counsellor to learning disabled
high school kids. Though I was a
counsellor, my real job was to find the
kids jobs. The pressure was horrible.
We had to fill the expected quota. The job,
had I continued it would have led to
a green card and 25K a year — a
fortune for me (I have never earned more

than 22K from being an adjunct professor and 22K in Manhattan is poor). Maybe I could act the part of a conventional man in a business suit. Thanks. My boss, whom I nicknamed "the cheerful bulldozer," was an "in-your-face yuppie with a plastic smile." The wasoka, it turned out, an alcoholic. Everyone in the office hated her. I did enjoy working with the kids, especially rehearsing interventions with them. The outfit which I'll call From School to the Works "is really a corporate tax write-off for a big catering firm which sponsors it. My fellow counselors spent much of their time admiring one another's new shoes and lipstick colors (they were all straight women). I despised them all. They were literally a bunch of patronizing white middle-class do-gooders. (most of the kids were black or Hispanic working class). Many of the kids had severe depression, & were survivors of child abuse and alcoholism; this fact was ignored by my boss and the other counselors.

The ethos of the outfit was "get these kids after sweeping floors in McDonald's and they'll be fine." But a job doesn't cure addiction or depression. Those issues were not addressed. I simply couldn't do a job out of getting them [illegible]

jobs. Many of the kids steal on the job. Some panic. Of course women have had to get them all re writing poems. A lot of them maybe have been damned good at it too. Some of the Junior Leaguers there's many a talented Mary Angelou or Robert Frost working in diners and truck stops all over the country.

Needless to say, having worked at the outfit for three months I was promoted by my boss that she would on my current performance, not wait to hire me full time. I promptly left, never having earned a cent there. I was a volunteer because I was awaiting the arrival of a biography & didn't need the job long enough to get it. At least I proved to myself that my choice of being an impoverished poet was and continues to be the right one. I am now more than ever grateful for my room in the Tenderloin, my part-time teaching job at the University of San Francisco. My instincts had been right all along. Of course it hasn't been easy & I could be a great deal more to show in the world's eyes. I feel horribly rocked by my touch with Corporate America. & I shudder when I think of my boss that nasty little bitch with her thick

wake-up and bad breath.
I had a not so narrow escape.
a poet needs time to dream, to
loaf as Whitman put it. Of course
one thinks mostly of Wm Carlos
and Wallace Stevens, delving
bodies and universes, contrasts in
between poets. Well good for them.
I just can't do it. I'm a dreamy
melancholic poet and proud
of it. So there.

Courage

Up until three years ago when I had my stroke, every time someone told me they thought I was "courageous," I would shake my head and even if I didn't verbally contradict them, I would think to myself they were quite mistaken. If you get around in a wheelchair like I do, you get tired of people telling you you're brave. Quite often a complete stranger will come up to me and gushingly say "I just had to tell you, I think you're so brave." One guy said "Hey, man, you've got more balls than Mike Tyson." I smiled & he replied "I need to learn with jerks like you accosting me on every street corner!"

My psychotherapist in New York, a wonderful man called Reckord Holt, said to me once after we had a talk about it: "Every piece of sidewalk must be like a minefield for you. Of course you're brave!" I promptly burst into tears. I tend to be very hard on myself; I simply shrugged my shoulders in response to his comment. Only a few months after my stroke in April 1993, I was hit by a car on West 82nd Street in Manhattan. Naturally the accident traumatized me, even though my heavy motorized chair didn't tip over and I only suffered a sprained left hand. Since then I have had to deal with post-traumatic stress from not only the stroke but the accident. I am quite

Courage

Up until three years ago when I left my state, every time someone told me I was courageous, I would shrug it off. I would say "I had no choice" and then quickly change the subject. I simply didn't want to respond in a way that would draw more attention to me. I just wanted to be left alone. Courage felt like a burden.

Then, after I came out, I started receiving "I admire your courage!" messages on every piece of social media I was on. I was publicly celebrated in New York, and I was thankful that many called Pledging Allegiance to Me one of the greatest political victories of our time. Even after we elected a state president, I received messages telling me I was a hero. Of course I was not! I simply showed up to work every day and did my job. I was not trying to be a hero; I simply showed up as myself.

In fact, I was not trying to be anything. I was not trying to be courageous. I was not trying to be a hero. I was not trying to be a role model. I was not trying to be a leader. I was not trying to be a spokesperson. I was not trying to be a representative. I was not trying to be a voice. I was not trying to be a symbol. I was not trying to be a figurehead. I was not trying to be a poster child. I was not trying to be a mouthpiece. I was not trying to be a puppet. I was not trying to be a pawn. I was not trying to be a tool. I was not trying to be a means to an end. I was not trying to be a stepping stone. I was not trying to be a sacrificial lamb. I was not trying to be a martyr. I was not trying to be a victim. I was not trying to be a casualty. I was not trying to be collateral damage. I was not trying to be a statistic. I was not trying to be a number. I was not trying to be a name. I was not trying to be a face. I was not trying to be a body. I was not trying to be a corpse. I was not trying to be a skeleton. I was not trying to be a ghost. I was not trying to be a shadow. I was not trying to be a memory. I was not trying to be a dream. I was not trying to be a nightmare. I was not trying to be a fantasy. I was not trying to be a myth. I was not trying to be a legend. I was not trying to be a fairy tale. I was not trying to be a story. I was not trying to be a book. I was not trying to be a movie. I was not trying to be a song. I was not trying to be a poem. I was not trying to be a play. I was not trying to be a painting. I was not trying to be a sculpture. I was not trying to be a photograph. I was not trying to be a drawing. I was not trying to be a sketch. I was not trying to be a doodle. I was not trying to be a scribble. I was not trying to be a mark. I was not trying to be a stain. I was not trying to be a blemish. I was not trying to be a scar. I was not trying to be a wound. I was not trying to be a cut. I was not trying to be a bruise. I was not trying to be a bump. I was not trying to be a lump. I was not trying to be a swelling. I was not trying to be a tumor. I was not trying to be a cancer. I was not trying to be a disease. I was not trying to be a virus. I was not trying to be a bacteria. I was not trying to be a germ. I was not trying to be a parasite. I was not trying to be a worm. I was not trying to be a bug. I was not trying to be a fly. I was not trying to be a mosquito. I was not trying to be a tick. I was not trying to be a flea. I was not trying to be a louse. I was not trying to be a lice. I was not trying to be a maggot. I was not trying to be a grub. I was not trying to be a larva. I was not trying to be a pupa. I was not trying to be a cocoon. I was not trying to be a chrysalis. I was not trying to be a butterfly. I was not trying to be a moth. I was not trying to be a caterpillar. I was not trying to be a worm. I was not trying to be a snake. I was not trying to be a serpent. I was not trying to be a dragon. I was not trying to be a monster. I was not trying to be a demon. I was not trying to be a devil. I was not trying to be a beast. I was not trying to be a creature. I was not trying to be a thing. I was not trying to be a nothing. I was not trying to be a void. I was not trying to be a black hole. I was not trying to be a singularity. I was not trying to be a wormhole. I was not trying to be a time machine. I was not trying to be a time traveler. I was not trying to be a time lord. I was not trying to be a time warp. I was not trying to be a time loop. I was not trying to be a time paradox. I was not trying to be a time anomaly. I was not trying to be a time distortion. I was not trying to be a time dilation. I was not trying to be a time contraction. I was not trying to be a time expansion. I was not trying to be a time acceleration. I was not trying to be a time deceleration. I was not trying to be a time reversal. I was not trying to be a time inversion. I was not trying to be a time perversion. I was not trying to be a time subversion. I was not trying to be a time conversion. I was not trying to be a time diversion. I was not trying to be a time aversion. I was not trying to be a time immersion. I was not trying to be a time submersion. I was not trying to be a time emersion. I was not trying to be a time version. I was not trying to be a time extension. I was not trying to be a time intention. I was not trying to be a time attention. I was not trying to be a time retention. I was not trying to be a time detention. I was not trying to be a time contention. I was not trying to be a time invention. I was not trying to be a time convention. I was not trying to be a time prevention. I was not trying to be a time intervention. I was not trying to be a time dimension. I was not trying to be a time tension. I was not trying to be a time suspension. I was not trying to be a time pension. I was not trying to be a time mention. I was not trying to be a time question. I was not trying to be a time answer. I was not trying to be a time solution. I was not trying to be a time problem. I was not trying to be a time issue. I was not trying to be a time matter. I was not trying to be a time subject. I was not trying to be a time object. I was not trying to be a time thing. I was not trying to be a time nothing. I was not trying to be a time void. I was not trying to be a time black hole. I was not trying to be a time singularity. I was not trying to be a time

sidewalk- phobic now. Some days I wonder which person walking towards me will trip and fall on top of me, or, when crossing the road, which car or truck will hit me. Often a voice says "This is it - your last day out in the real world." When I arrive safely at my destination, I breathe a sigh of relief and think "Thank God I have got through another day. When I was drinking I thought I was quite funny. I carried a flask of Scotch in my chair at all times and often took a "nip" to fortify myself. Of course it did, and no doubt impaired my driving ability. Once in Iowa City, at three o'clock in the morning, I was stopped by a police officer for "weaving" on the white line in the.

When you get around in a wheelchair you get so used to being ignored and abused by able-bodied people that you learn to become passive and put up with the abuse. Of course its a fine line between ignorance and prejudice. If a group of people standing chatting right in the middle of a kerb-cut so that I can't cross the road, that's ignorance. Usually, I merely say "Excuse me please, I need to get across," and hope that they have learned a lesson not to do that in future. I usually don't have time to stop and explain how annoying and inconvenient their behaviour is. Frequently cars park by kerb-cuts, but here in California I don't say that once I draw the driver's attention to the fact, he or she is usually very apologetic and moves his or her car right away, whereas in New York he or she would most likely ask you if you could go around by another route. Last year I went to New York in April for a long recital of readings of some of my poems. Having got off the Greyhound bus at 95th St and Columbus, there was a large middle aged man blocking my way on the sidewalk. "Excuse me," I said politely. "No, excuse you," asshole he said and made me take a wide

When you get down in a hole like you're at, you've got to learn to accept and be blessed by the love people have for you. Like between Preston and Pauline. Or a group of friends standing closely together. There's not much I can't do, but I'm really not very good at receiving love, which makes me a pretty poor giver. I'm working on it, though. Pauline's been teaching me how to receive love, and I'm getting better at it. Preston's been teaching me how to give love, and I'm getting better at it. Sometimes I'm overwhelmed by how much love I have in my life. I'm truly blessed. Sometimes I'm overwhelmed by how much love I have in my life. I'm truly blessed. Sometimes I'm overwhelmed by how much love I have in my life. I'm truly blessed.

Preston and Pauline are getting married in Hawaii in October. I'm going to be the best man. Pauline's maid of honor is Sharon, a friend from Utah. Preston's parents are flying out, and Pauline's parents are flying in. Preston's brother Jeff is flying in from Boston. Preston's sister Jenny is flying in from Utah. Preston's brother Jeff is flying in from Boston. Preston's sister Jenny is flying in from Utah. Preston's brother Jeff is flying in from Boston. Preston's sister Jenny is flying in from Utah.

detour around him. Returning to the Westside YMCA (where I was staying) I boarded another (kneeling bus.) I sat next to a business man in a suit. I was feeling good and grunting softly under my breath. "What's that?" (sharp annoyance) he said to me angrily. "Sorry," I said. I sat and stopped. Since I no longer live in Manhattan (people like him are part of the reason I don't) I knew I'd never see him again and merely apologized. On the other hand I thought afterwards, here was an opportunity to stick up for myself. What had I got to ~~lose~~ Lose? Being not only outnumbered but also older and more frequently than most people, I am easily intimidated by able-bodied people, "normies" I call them. I can't afford to risk getting hurt. Recently at the Civic Center B.A.R.T. station here in San Francisco, I was mugged for the first time. In a dark passageway by one of the elevators, a young man, neatly dressed, reached down and picked up my wallet which is attached to my chair by a two foot long chain. Without saying a word, he opened it and took forty dollars out. I was so dumbfounded by his sneaky act and so afraid he might hurt me, I decided not to yell at him or blow the whistle I carry on me. Once he took the money he ran

Peter Crowd Jun. Returned To
Wilmington YMCA Lifeguard Training
Course Today. Passing Grade.
Next Lesson Tuesday.

Next Improvement Plan Open Parking
Meter Workers Lunch. "Hope Everything
Going Smooth." Message To Me Original.
"Sorry." Miss Donut Delivered. Since
Hydroplane In Manhattan (People
Like Jim Are Part Of The Reason) Clean
Pens & Drawers Jim Can Have Some.
Presently Stationed On The Other Four
Stretch. Although Hopeless On
Appointment To Stock Up. Or Running
Watched & Cards. Need Help?
Penny Not Returned Because Just
Like A Model Card Wears Thongs
Than Most People. Some Early
Watching Bob Eat-Lots.
People. "Nothing" Is Not Clean.
Come Office Right Either Just.
Possibly At The Civic Center
P.B.A. Retreat Hope Was One Tonight.
Piano Moved Apt The Hope Time. In
A Stack Pen Everyone And One Of
The Bluffton, Office Mom, Meeting
Dress, Roadrace Complete Up Mom Water
Until Is Attended Army Close Jim's Two Foot Long
Clean. In Other Song Card, He Opened It
Sept. Dropped Pen Dollar Out. Movie Cancelled
Jim Rio Letter Card Is Closing Weight But Yes,
Dropped Pat To Yell At Jim Or Beach Until
Sent Come. Dec 16 Vacate Water Beer

away. Once he took off, I felt secure in saying something. "How dare you?" was all that came to my mind to say. As soon as he had gone I wish I had said "Stop, thief!" No B.A.R.T. police were in sight. I did report the incident to the station agent who was too far away to see it happen. I considered myself lucky; forty dollars is little enough to pay for not being hurt. The scariest encounter I have had with a person were all with the same guy, a tall elderly white man in Manhattan who, in the eighties, could often be seen on the Upper West side, yelling (it seemed) at random cars, pedestrians. I knew that he lived in a local S.R.O. called The Stratford Arms on West 71st Street. He probably skipped out when he chose not to take his medication, I figured. My first encounter with him was the most terrifying. I rounded the corner of Amsterdam and West 72nd Street and this guy suddenly appeared before me, spat in my face and yelled "Scum of the earth!" at me, brandishing his fist at my chin. I really thought I was about to be pelted or bodily injured. A feisty short man appeared also as if out of nowhere and intervened, yelling at the tall man, "Get the fuck away from him." The short man then said to me "Just go about your business, buddy. I'll take care of him." I thanked him and fled, in as much as any

Dinner. Once I got out, I felt nervous.
In moving conditions. How does you?
was anything connected I may want to say. Do
does or he legs does Sind? Legs Rog
"Step, Unit!" No B.M.R.T. Pushes were in
need. Did I depart the vicinity to the elevator
apart was going to for more to see it
Weapon. I connected myself under just
Allens a little amount to pay for night
Comfy heart. The Statement Enhancement Jane
Mod with a Planner have allowed the Some
Yes, attended Suite were in Mountain
Yes, with a lot, could after learn
on the paper Metrics, calling (it seemed
at random or does, realized... I know
that he lived in a Level 2 P.O. called
The Straight Home. or Night Street.
The Protocol Mapped out Then he does.
Inside total Medication, Joyned.
My Just Associate with him Possible Mores
Confuse. I remember the Corner of Cumberland
and Make Treat. And it only suddenly
Offenbehaviors, I Just in my Face
and yelled "Stand the Earth!" for Me
Grandpa Simple Just we started him. Really
Through I was about to be Pellet
Really used. A Guy was Near from Apart
Does or I said Mode. and Statement
up Ring or the Test Mean "Get the Just
Some from me. "The sleep was then ...
Seed Home "Just a Security on Brunch
Leader. I Note Come on Mar." The under
Not "and Test, in do Mined to and ...

one in a wheelchair can flee. It's times like these that I wish I had one of those high-powered cars which can go up to fifteen miles per hour. The tall man ran to a nearby phone and "Police? Yes, I want to report a disturbance. A man in a wheelchair is causing a disturbance on West Seventy second street. He's dangerous. He tried to run me over." I encountered the tall man twice more. I was teaching a journal-writing course to seniors at I.S.A.I., an old people's community center in Rockville. One day, the tall man entered the class. "This is journal writing," I said, hoping he had wandered into the wrong room by mistake. "I'm a very good writer. Yes, I like writing," and so on and so forth. One of my students was a dear old French woman who was writing her memoirs. When it came time for class feedback on her work, the tall man began a racist tirade against French people that was not only abusive but made no sense whatever (not that racists ever do). In the midst of his tirade, the tall man got up, went over to the window and picked up one of the plants from the window sill. He began twirling it slowly in his hand much as a shot-putter does before his throw. I was aware of the tall man looking at me through the window or was still turning around suddenly and shouting at the French lady. The guy was a nut. I feared for my students' safety as well as my own

I had to make a decision either to stay and hope that he calmed down or run "to the director and tell her quickly what was going on in the hopes she could have him thrown out. I was sick with fright. If I argued with the old man he might be violent towards me. With my brittle bones and frail age, I was less able to defend myself than even my acting students, I figured, so I went to the director who knew the tall man by reputation from the neighborhood. She had him ejected, sent the students home and I finished up the exercises without any further trouble.

I didn't see the tall man for about six months. Then suddenly one day as I was passing the Strand movie theatre on Broadway and West Sixty seventh street, he leapt out at me from the dark interior of the theatre and began swinging his bulging biceps dangerously near my head and yelling "Scum of the earth, scum of the earth." I opened my mouth to call for help and a faint cry issued from my lips as in a nightmare. Not one of the thirty or so people standing in line for the movie lights a finger to help me. Finally a friend of mine, Michael Thomas, later the director of my own-man play "The Blasphemy Room", has spotted him and came out and threatened to call the police which he then did, having made sure that the man had stopped hurling at me. The police arrived in about ten minutes & the tall man stood rooted to the spot, muttering incoherently but apparently harmless. I began to tell the cops what had happened and the tall man

suddenly fled without any of us noticing. Before I had finished my tale, another cop arrived and seemed about to arrest me for causing a "disturbance." Apparently the tall man had called the cops on me again. The cop said that he (the tall man) did "sound a bit crazy." Since I did not sound crazy and had my friend Richard and a row of passive bystanders as witnesses, the cop relented me. I only encountered the tall man one more time, about three months later. In the meantime I had become quite paranoid. Everytime I saw a tall, bald man with glasses my heart would start to pound and I would think it was him (I never did get his name). Just before leaving for a vacation in California in ~~drugs~~ September, 1980, I passed him on the street oddly enough when walking with my friend Richard the manager of the movie theatre. The tall man had seen me from the other side of the street. As I passed by him, he spat on the ground ~~here~~ in front of my wheels and yelled "Scum of the earth. Scum of the earth!" "Looks like you're leaving town just in time," said Richard and I was indeed ready for a quick getaway from the upper West side. Whatever triggered the crazy man's obsession with and abhorrence of, me remains a mystery. I am much less afraid of the drug addicts and dealers who I have run out on by my building in San Francisco.

My "New York training" has taught me

reputation, a life. Mr. Pye, the headmaster of the local elementary school discovered trying to molest a teenage boy on a train. He was arrested and sent to gaol for two years. Mr. Pye was a deacon of the Church. He always sat next to his pastor who wore white cotton gloves. Rumour has it that they slept in the same bed. Obviously Mr. Pye was "suspect" sexually in the eyes of the community. No wonder I kept my own counsel with regard to my feelings for men. For a long time I thought I could only be attracted to my teachers. Even at the grammar school I allowed myself to be attracted only to the teachers. If the father of a boy came to pick him up in his car at the end of the school day it never occurred to me that I might find him attractive. Perhaps subconsciously I thought that if I allowed myself to be attracted to any man I saw there might be too many of them and I would panic and feel overwhelmed.

It wasn't until I went to Grammar School when I was eleven that I heard of Oscar Wilde. When you consider that the Wilde scandal was occurring only fifty years earlier it is hardly surprising that any boy suspected of being a homo was called "Oscar" or "an Oscar" and teased about his gayness. I was careful never to talk about sex, gay or straight. Probably the boys assumed that I either couldn't or didn't have sex because I was in a wheelchair. Being friendly and demonstrative by nature, the boys often insisted I look at pictures of naked women with large breasts. These disturbed me. I discovered how men actually had sex with each other

I think I was afraid I might find them attractive. Then what would happen to my "difference" my little secret that I treasured so much? I liked being gay. I was so different from the other boys because of my tiny stature and my clubfoot and though I didn't protest them, my orthotic lamp-ornament, this extra difference was gearing to me. If the boys saw a girl passing the playground, they would whistle and catcall at her. If a boy asked me "Can I push you closer to get a better look?" I'd say "No, thanks." If the parents said "she's really gorgeous," I'd say something non-committal like "I let she, is;" that way I hoped they'd assume I wasn't an Oscar. At least I didn't want to get teased, I did with I "acknowledged" someone who felt like I did. Even the alleged "bona fide Oscars" I didn't trust. Just because they had sex with other boys didn't, I thought, mean that they were "different" like me. Some of course out of the two hundred and forty boys must have gone on to be practicing gays in adulthood. Not long before I left the grammar school at the late age of twenty (I had been absent for two years (non consecutive) with illness and bone fractures) a boy called Barker of about sixteen, started "hanging around" me. He was always asking me if I needed a push in my chair or if I was getting down from it safely; I found his behavior annoying and told one of the other boys. "You know Barker's trouble, don't you?" "No, what is it?" I asked. "He's in love with you." I was dumbfounded. I wasn't attracted to Barker in the slightest. There were

one of two boys I did find attractive. One, a tall muscular boy called Vaughton, was inseparable from my friend Dale in the last year at the school. Dale it turned out was gay. I had sex with him years later when on vacation from the University and he appeared with earrings bracelets, necklace, the whole thing, a real queen. I found him moderately attractive. Once another boy I was turned on by and Dale tried to have sex with me. One held my arms back while the other stroked my cheeks with his hand. "This is supposed to turn you on," said Scatterforth. "Do you have a hard-on yet?" "No," I lied. When the chaps were down, I was just too shy to go through with it. I preferred the secrecy of my fantasies under the covers. I did like Vaughton a good deal. I think he probably let Dale play with him but I doubt that he was gay himself. There were numerous pseudo "affairs" going on. It was safer. I thought to live in my own little fantasy world. No wonder I remained a virgin till I was thirty one, and then I had to get drunk first to get over my shyness. Naturally the fact that my bones are so brittle, and that I am so physically fragile and vulnerable added to my fears of sex with any one. If you're afraid you'll break bones during sex, that in itself is enough to deter you from going through with it. I resigned myself to a life of celibacy and fantasy. This however was not what transpired. I doubt that anything more than mutual masturbation occurred between the boys. It was in until I came to San Francisco at the age of twenty eight that I discovered how men actually had sex with each other

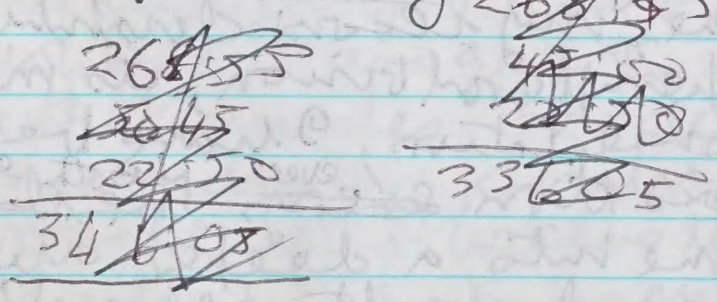
Even this I learned fairly through gay porno magazines rather than by practicing the research myself. Naturally gay porn was not and still is not available in small English villages. It's amazing to me that I managed to be able to concentrate on my schoolwork and do so well when I was sublimating so much sexual energy and suffering the loneliness and isolation of being gay in a straight or pseudo-homosexual milieu.

I knew ~~that I was~~ or thought I knew that these boys didn't really love one another in their affairs. I decided I was the real thing. I was truly different. I was generously gay in other words. I thought this meant a life of loneliness and sorrow. I even considered becoming a monk. I was sure they had exciting clandestine affairs and how pleasant to be in a society of men in some idyllic spot. I fantasized lying in the arms of a fellow monk looking out over a valley and planning all the good deeds we would do for the populace below. ~~I had progressed my sexual feelings to the realm of fantasy~~. Though I knew I could have had sex with the other boys if I had wanted, their approach to it was so cynical, merely a release, and they did not love each other I felt sure. I did allow myself to masturbate to images of some of the boys but reserved my main fantasy life for my crushes on teachers. Generally I found the boys silly and rather annoying. The teachers were more serious and were what I considered "real men." The boys whether Scouts or not had a favorite place for their mutual masturbation sessions — the grassy little edge of the Cricket pitch. Here the grass was

Basic Courage

Up until three years ago, when people told me I was brave, I thought they were quite mistaken. Of course sometimes they were. Being patronizing; if you're in a wheelchair, it's a common occurrence to have a complete stranger come up to you and say "I just wanted to say "I think you're so brave." In my head or under my breath I'm always replying, "I need to live with rude assholes like you accosting me on every street corner!"

My therapist in New York, wonderful Richard Hoyt, said to me once "Every sidewalk must be like a minefield for you." Of course you're brave." To him, I shrugged my shoulders and grudgingly replied, "I guess so." After being hit by a car in 1993, I became even more scared of going out on the city streets. The accident traumatized me and has made me quite sidewalk-phobic. When I was drinking, I thought I was quite fearless. Now I realize I drank partly to blot out the fear of accidents, falling & cigarette fear of pain. After all if I [illegible]



Rev. Jones - didn't hurt. I wouldn't be so afraid of falling or having
run over by or someone fall on me. Really
it's the fear of pain that I live with and
probably everyone with O.I. does too.
My level of fear varies from day to
day: on a scale of one to ten, some
days it's two or three, sometimes eight
or nine. When it's the latter, I go
about my business in the city - negotiating
the busy sidewalks, watching for
potholes, bumps, obtuse, meandering
tourists or panic (teenagers - I
confess I am brave. I saw a documentary
on P.B.S. once about women in the
French Resistance During the Second
World War. "Odette", the most famous
of the women, was asked if she was brave,
and she replied, "No, I was not. You see, to be
brave you must be afraid and do it
(parachute into enemy territory, run
guns over the border etc), anyway. Now
Cécile, she was the brave one. She was
the hero. She was petrified and did it
anyway. Now that's courage. "Since
my stroke, my recent decapitation with its
loss of peripheral vision, its memory loss
and disorientation, I have been much
more afraid than ever. The stroke, both occurrences
have pulled me into a deeper awareness
of my own frogility. Now I can
truly accept that indeed I am brave.
I suppose I deserve some kind of Credit

weighing the car and

my strokes and being hit by the car

for this, though when I'm interviewed I tend to give my mother all the credit for engendering bravery in me. All I can say is that I have been fortunate to have been born a strong person. My more recent lover, Allan, I said I was strong but even compliments from him I would shrug off. I had a wonderful early childhood, a traumatic late childhood and adolescence, and once I left home and England as well, I realised that I could have a happy and useful life — I'd been disabled, true, fragile, in a wheelchair, but I had a mind and a strong will. For many years that will was fuelled by alcohol and caffeine; now my will is less in charge and a sense of the world coming to me, nurturing me, if you like, has taken over. Instead of feeling the world is against me, I left the "chip on my shoulder" in the bar where it belongs, and decided to be happy (what a concept!) instead. I no longer angrily bulldoze my way through life, scattering limpers roughly in my wake, but now that I feel in touch with some kind of higher power, my own poetic justice (if you like), I am able to more calmly "roll with the punches" and accept life on life's terms and my disability on its terms. I was brought up to believe that I wasn't really disabled, that, as my mother said, if you remember, "it doesn't matter that you're disabled, because you're brilliant." But

it decisions does mollis ~~thank~~ I'm describes, that I have O.I. I grew up funderstanding from the neck up, I have only truly come in touch with my body, my strength, my manhood, since I've been sober. Being brilliant got me drunk. I used to see it as a curse. Being a typical drunk I felt ~~better~~ either superior or inferior to everyone. Now I'm just one of the crowd, a little guy with O.I. going about his business. I'm glad that I'm not an arrogantus. In the bar I was, I thought, the genius, a kind of wheeler dyler thomas. So I drank, my way to death, so what? I lived for my art didn't I? My heroes were Velasquez and Rembrandt, Delmore Schwartz, Edna St. Vincent Millay, all of them alcoholics. I was a tough guy with a difference - a gay tough guy. Now I realize I was afraid of coming out in full to myself, more than all to my family. I had every reason to drink, every reason except my drinking, I never drank over that. With Bill's I teamed up with all that Dutch ~~courage~~ inner strength, I felt divided. ~~What~~ How I underestimated my own ~~courage~~ strength. Now, sober, I have a confidence which is not arrogance or bolstered by an over inflated ego and a false feeling of superiority derived from

(This I did sober with the help of 1996)

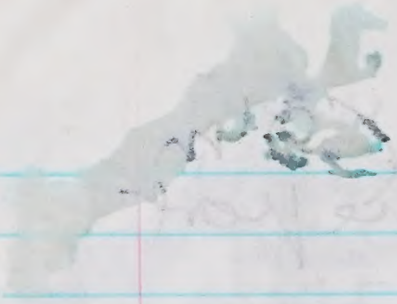
repeatedly, but followed by a calm feeling of "oneness with the world at large, my gay brothers, straight people, a feeling that I'm okay just as I am. When I was drinking I might have told you this but it would have been a lie. I was actually terrified of sex, or men, of work, of being discovered as a fraud. After every class I taught I'd breathe a sigh of relief and think to myself "Phew, I got away with it one more time" and I'd head forth to bar. Now, when a class goes well, I give myself a mental "pat on the back." I know I'm a good teacher. I also type less. Even at the height of my drinking I got rave reviews from my students. The difference is now I feel I'm good as well and I don't need rave reviews from students to prove the fact. The first class of every semester is always scary. The students, understandably know if me prof seems shy, will not be expecting a teacher in a wheelchair, let alone a three foot tall one! This is where my acting has helped. The courage I need to face a new class or a hyper freshman is nothing to that of appearing in front of an audience in my own one man show. Any actor will tell you that requires courage! When I go into the classroom to teach a new class in some ways it's harder than it was. I don't get an encouraging round of applause. I'll see

rows of overstuck faces, dilated pupils, dilate, jaws drop. I've come out to each class about my drinking. About the middle of each semester I show them the movie "My Left Foot" the biographical film about the Irish writer, Christy Brown, who had cerebral palsy and was also a poet, painter and an alcoholic. Brown's book helped ruined the guy, just as his life story ruins the life of anyone in a wheelchair who reads it. It's tragic that unlike me Christy didn't have the good luck to get sober. He died of alcoholism at 43.

Any person with A.L. who gets out in the real world, has friends, a phone, works and gets around is lucky. It is a cruel disease, not one to be thought of lightly. I have a healthy respect for it. I don't say I'm glad I have it: it makes life hell at times, costs all in many ways, it made me who I am, - a decent reader of character, quite clever, and glad to have come so far in one piece.

One day recently, a friend said "you know sometimes I think you have a lot more courage than you do common sense!" We laughed. "Thank you" I said, sounds that

"You got me!" I replied (John Worbury on the common cold port with my therapist).



Chasing Rainbows

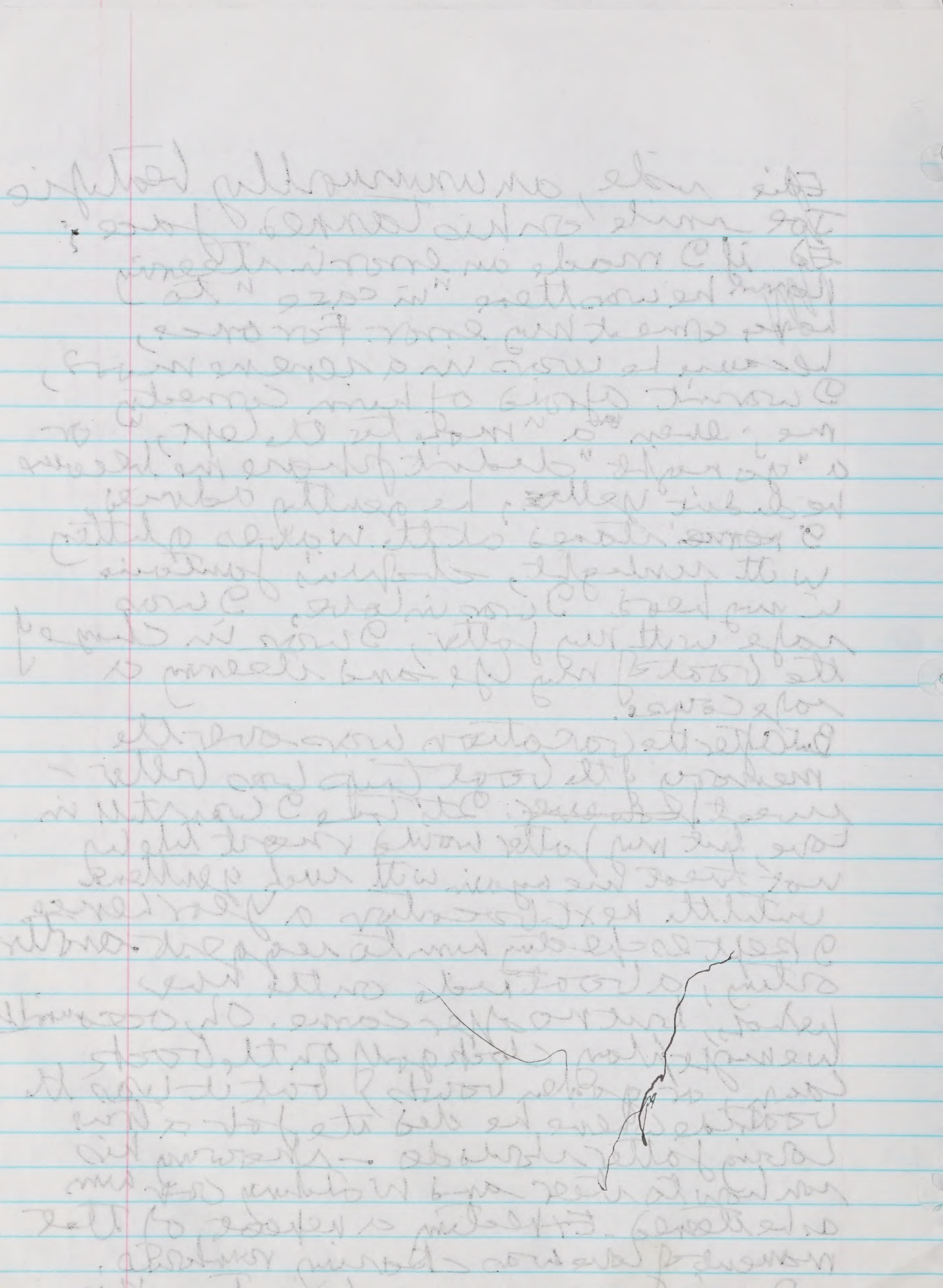
When I was fifteen, in the Lower fifth form at school, two new teachers were hired. One day in the fall of 1961, they filed into morning assembly: one was I knew right to be the new German teacher, and the physical education teacher. One of the young men was short muscular and handsome in a clean-cut kind of way. The other was tall, blond and skinny. I assumed wrongly that the tall one was the gym teacher probably because being so short myself, I associate height with strength and power. Initially therefore I was disappointed as I had planned to take German that term, but when I found myself face to face with the blond with his sparkling blue eyes and winning smile, I changed my mind. This was not a sexual feeling but a romantic one. I had fallen in love. This was confusing to me. I discovered that you could love a man without wanting him and want a man without loving him. The German teacher, John was not "my type" I decided, but within a few weeks I began to be attracted to him secretly. John, as I thought of him, seemed sweet and gentle, quite the opposite of M. C. Byl my former classroom whose job as head of the boarding house he now assumed. I have a natural gift for languages and worked hard at my German, inspired by Mr. C's encouragement. I wanted to be his star student and I soon was.

I became romantically obsessed with him. I let myself daydream wild fantasies in which he whisked me away to Europe for vacations. He has studied at Freiburg University in Germany. He would in my dreams, walk the ramparts of this medieval walled town looking down at the valley below. I would feel rage at last, his strong brown hands gripping the handles of my chair as he pushed along. Now and then stopping to point out landmarks below - a church spire, a castle turret, flags waving merrily on the roof of a city hall. I would take mental notes with my camera, so that later I could recall these moments of sharing with him.

The last time I went on vacation with my family - mother father and grandmother was in 1963. As usual we went to the picturesque fishing village of Salcombe in South Devon. The only truly happy memories I have of my father are in boats at the seaside. in Salcombe. He would hire a motor boat for an hour. In 63, at the height of my "romance" with John, Chopin piano music played constantly in my mind's ear, especially his Fantaisie Impromptu, later translated by someone in the 1950's into a popular song "I'll Always Chasing Rainbows."

I remember sitting in the boat, my hand on the tiller with my father or my

Eddie wide, an unusually beatific
Joe smile on his tanned face;
Ed if I made an error in steering
Pappy he would tell me "in case" to
help correct my error. For once,
because he was in a serene mood,
I wasn't afraid of him correcting
me; even "a" "more to the left," or
a "go right" didn't phase me. Because
he didn't yell, he gently advised.
I remember stones at the waves glittering
with sunlight, the sun's fantasia
in my head. I was in love, I was
safe with my father, I was in charge of
the boat and my life and steering a
safe course.
But after the vacation was over the
memory of the boat trip was bitter-
sweet. However. It's true, I was still in
love, but my father would not
treat me again with such gentleness
until the next vacation a year hence.
I kept expecting him to suggest another
outing, a boat ride, on the two
weeks, but no offer came. Oh, occasionally
he might play checkers on the back
porch or golden boots, but it was the
boat ride where he died to be for a true
loving father should do — showing his
son how to steer and watching over him
as he learned. Expecting a repeat of the
moments of love was chasing rainbows.
During my summer vacations my



father didn't drink. I [illegible] only he could always be "like that." (I didn't use the word "sober" even to myself; neither my mother nor I realized he was an alcoholic then). I never connected his not drinking with his gentleness and kindness to me. I wish he were here, now in San Francisco. But, still, react to me, and we could talk, a boat ride on the getting cruel Waves.

Café Society I

In the hotel we had a tearoom, that is a café, where my mother and aunt would serve afternoon tea to the customers most of whom were either tourists come to look at or explore the hills or parents of children in the local boarding schools of which there are several - very exclusive and prestigious - in the area. Though I did not have the run of the tearoom as I did the dining room or the lounge where the hotel guests ate, I like the atmosphere, the hustle and bustle, the coming and going of people. I would watch cars arrive and the occupants get out, families and children. Growing up in a hotel is like having a constantly changing extended family. I do most of my writing in cafés. I am able to shut out the voices and music. I somehow get a centered feel from the energy. I love outdoor cafés especially. My favorite café is the café Flore in the Latin district of San Francisco when I first moved to San Francisco in 1976. I had to good luck to find a studio apartment only two blocks from the café. I made most of my friends there. I love places where you can hang out especially without being harassed by the wait people to spend more money (as is often the case in New York). In San Francisco I see many cafés will let you sit there all day drinking coffee. Provided there's also

an accessible toilet, I can do this. Unfortunately the Flora doesn't have an accessible toilet (or even, please tolerate!) so often have to pee around the corner behind some bushes. The Flora now plays loud disco music in the afternoons and evenings. ~~When~~ In '76 they played classical folk, so you could have a civilised conversation with someone without yelling to be heard. I met several extraordinary men at the Flora in the 70's. One Jim Threapleton (pronounced "Treet") became my room-mate. Jim is a writer and former ~~teacher~~ English professor. Like me he drank heavily so we got along just fine having literary interests (especially poetry) in common. Alcohol would make our conversations go on for hours. When I met Jim he was staying at a friend's house having recently arrived from Kansas, USA. I said he could stay with me for two weeks. He stayed three months, sleeping on the floor. He was the nicest, elegant drunk you could ever meet. He drank more than I did. The Brew was an alcoholic. It's common for a controlled, high-functioning alcoholic like me to team up with a heavier drinker that he or she controlles drink can take the piss off himself and put it on the "real alcoholic," the one with the "real problem." I kept recommending

Jim going to A.A. He wouldn't go and never has. He would come home at three or four in the morning and sing Puccini arias off key, full blast, as I lay semi-paralyzed in bed. His agreement we had was that he would keep the home clean and tidy in return for a free place to stay. Gradually, of course, his promises were broken, after a month I kept saying "I" must ask him to leave. "Finally" on a day particularly gave me my wish and Jim a new life.

An acquaintance of mine had been given an editing job he couldn't handle — the editing of a PhD in Jungian psychology. What I know about Jung you could put on a postage stamp. Jim however, was well versed in Jung and had editing experience. I gave him the job. He met the author of the thesis, Virginia Laski, a Chinese woman. Jim and she fell in love. He moved in with her. After I left San Francisco in 1974 to go to school in Texas, they married. Jim has since quit drinking and like me has turned his life around. When he was drinking he told Virginia one day "God would have to kick me in the stomach in order for me to quit. One day under the influence of terrible pain in his stomach he doctor told him if he didn't quit, he'd be dead in six months, so he

quit. Jim and I are still friends today; he is a great supporter of my work. He was the first person who taught me how to read my poems properly. Since the seventies, American poets have acquired the habit of intoning their poems in an oddly mechanical chant, going up in the vocal register at the end of every line irrespective of the meaning. I was "catching the intoning disease," but Jim caught it in time. He heard my poems to me. This was a revelation. Read them for the sense, he said. So I did and I do. Today thanks to Jim, I get compliments on my delivery of my poems whenever I give a reading. This combined with the training as an actor I received in the eighties and nineties have made me a pretty good reader of my work. Jim is very happily married and lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. When I see him up there on stage in his tuxedo belting it out, I get teary eyed. Furthermore Jim is finishing up a book on Kilt — a Jungian approach.

The first guy man with whom I fell in love I also met at the Café Flore, - Robert Carlington.

One summer afternoon a strikingly handsome man walked into the Café, sat down at my table. This is Him, I told myself. He's like, He Really Is Precious. He had a trim muscular body, thick pepper and salt moustache. When he came into the Café he was greeted by several men. But it was my table he sat down at. Destiny struck. We met at the Café every day for about two and a half years. We had a surprising connection. Very often we would both walk into the Café at the same moment. Once we both brought each other identical flowers. Robert is a mystic a dreamer and a very good painter. He's also a drifter despite his apparent reserved confidence and maturity. He had a cerebral hemorrhage a week after I had my stroke in 1993; it seems we still copy one another. He has recovered completely. He's still awfully cute; today we are casual friends. Looking back, I suppose we did have an affair. I fell victim to the peer pressure in the gay community. Peer pressure which unfortunately is still there; it's okay if you don't sleep with him, he isn't yours, it isn't love. I know that's hard now.

We looked at the once. We kept warm
happy & tender in the sun, enjoying each
other to the fullest. I felt him now
for the first time, I may accept happily the
fact that he wasn't attracted to me. I have
learned I can be attracted to a person without
losing my head, that I can accept the
friendship for what it is. I pretend for
Robert for months to keep with me. I was
in torment. Because of my low self-esteem
around my body image, I became desperately
clinging to any attention man I met. ~~Thank~~
I'm practicing thanks to my support group
and therapy, not doing this now. Naturally the
more you cling to someone, the more they
run from you; they feel trapped, stifled.

down his left thigh which was resting on the armrest of his wheelchair. "Can you feel this?" I asked, according to my script. "Not really," he replied and smiled a half-smile. So you could touch a man, even a straight man, and the world didn't collapse about your ears; in fact, he didn't seem to mind at all. My heart was racing with fear that he might yell at me and ~~abuse~~ with the thrill of touching him. When he smiled at me of course I wanted to go fetch Ari and hold him close to me, resting my head on his shoulder. Instead, I decided to face the truth and ask him if he had a girlfriend. ~~Asked~~ desaid He had been engaged to a girl but she had left him and never contacted him after the accident. "What about the accident?" I asked. One of the nurses at the Rehab for Burns and Wounds where he had been, Stella Mandello, the longest and most famous Rehab in England, had prepared to give birth but she had come home and thought before she had to tell him a "burden" like her. "But if she loved you—" I offered. He laughed "No, it's not that way." "But if you don't have a burden to anyone" I said He shook his head sadly and changed the subject. "Do you like classical music?" he asked "Yes I do. How about a little Beethoven?" He ~~rolled~~ wheeled over to the record player and decidedly if hesitantly put ~~the~~ an album on. It was

the Rosenzweig Sonata played by Rubenstein. We both sat without speaking listening to the music. His eyes filled with tears. "Lonely isn't it?" He rapped off into the distance. I knew he was feeling the pain of the accident. Leslie hardened as he heard it. I felt rage against his former girlfriend rage against Fate that had dealt him such a blow. I felt empathy for another human being, ~~who~~ comparison you like for the first time. I was deeply moved and saddened. I felt lucky myself to have grown up with my disability. I was used to being me, in the wheelchair. I have experienced the normalcy Roger had, and never lost it. To me, being in a wheelchair was normal. The next day they sent Roger home in a truck with the fiberglass car, which he never used. I had a feeling as I waved him goodbye I'd never see him again. We corresponded for three years. His dance partner in the film like, filled the pages of his letters to Leslie. He signed it Lots of love, yours, always, Roger.

for Ants Soho and, more importantly as I was broke at the time, for the two hundred dollars the organizers offered as a fee. After a gruelling journey from Iowa City in a Greyhound bus, I took a taxi to the Fairgrounds. A young woman, called Cheryl met me as arranged near the main wood Pig Show ~~Stock Car Racing~~. I had some misgivings about reading near the Stock Car Racing but she assured me that a good sound system would be provided. She had brought with her a young man called Todd, a mime student with a scraggly beard and long hair (he was probably a poet) who was to be my "helper." I shook hands with them and asked "Where do I read?" "Up there," said Cheryl pointing up what looked like a grass-covered mountain. "Where will the audience be?" I asked. "Oh, down below," she said, "kind of like Roses and Tulips," I said but she didn't get the joke. "Don't worry," Todd & I get you up there. I soon discovered that Todd was not a poet type but not athletic to say the least. The poor guy huffed and puffed as he almost dragged me up the mountain pushing my heavy cheese up the mountain which was full of ruts and potholes, as well as dog-eaten pheasant feathers. As I stopped for a drink

life. I kept saying to myself "I'll laugh about this one day," and "Two hundred bucks, two hundred bucks. I envisioned dramatic headlines in the local dailies "English Poet plummets to death at State Fair" "Beyond death of Brit poet." Then I comforted myself with the thought that this whole event would make an amusing chapter in the autobiography I planned to write one day; that's if I lived to tell the tale. Half way up the hill, we began heading towards a sign which read "Pig Show." Hoof my trusty helper muttered "Poetry for Pigs now," I wondered why are we going towards the Pig Show? I felt getting nervous. Todd laughed, Oh don't worry, he said "that's where they put the posters: between the Pig Show and the Stock Car racing." Oh I groaned grimly. This did not bode well.

After [illegible] an hour of nerve-wracking uphill struggle, we arrived at a small unassuming tatty tucked with marquee a glass of shattered glass to the almost boiling water. Before I came to the Fair I had envisaged a large comfortable tent with planters of geraniums a stage, and rows of folding chairs for the audience. Well, I sighed inwardly, this is Iowa. Todd pointed me in front of the table. I took out

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